

Gutman--1

Kleinhans--

One must follow one's illusion, whatever satisfaction there is lies along that way. Walter K. Gutman Walter K. Gutman was a true amateur of filmmaking. Coming to cinema after a very successful career as a Wall Street securities analyst, he could indulge in filmmaking with no other goal than to please himself. His two major themes--the personal quirks of historical personages and the filmmakers' fascination with large, physically powerful women--are singularly his own. Freed of the need to have a traditional or recognizable artistic career, Gutman filmed for the love of self-expression, and being wealthy, he could make films as he wanted and when he wanted. That such a stance is repulsive to a large part of the art world reveals much about the status of art in our time.

While the etymological origin of "amateur" reveals it to be someone who does something for the love of it, for disinterested pleasure, in the current art world usage the term stands always opposed to "professional." The professional is someone who makes a living from their art, who pursues it with an aim, at least, with the distinct implication of the person's having mastered knowledge and skills agreed upon by a recognized and privileged peer group. From this position the hobbyist and part-timer becomes scorned.

There are, of course some good reasons why professionals scorn amateur work. Home movies are often ineptly made, full of shaky hand held camerawork and virtually arbitrary editing. They often use formulas and conventions in the most literal way and have subjects treated in an essentially banal and pathetic manner: the scenic tourist view, cute children and pets, the mere presence of people at ceremonial occasions. At its most artistically dismal, this kind of work uses the simple recording function of the medium to evoke the spectator's already established feelings (established through experience or through art): awe at the Grand Canyon's grandeur, amusement at a puppy's antics, satisfaction at a legal establishment and social recognition of monogamous heterosexuality.

But there are many bad reasons why professionals scorn amateur work: to separate themselves from much of capitalist society regards as frivolous and self-indulgent, to demark their techniques as special (and thus worth paying more for), and to deny the always-present sentimentalism of the reproducing image. Scorned themselves by the Hollywood's 35mm and 70mm moviemakers, many 16mm film

artists assert their professionalism in the most elitist and assimilationist way, by denying their own origins (16mm was, after all, developed as an amateur home movie format).

Gutman found a career in the stock market through a combination of dealing with some of his father's investments in post-crash Wall Street and needing a stable income to raise a family. He eventually developed a letter to investors which became known equally for its good tips and peculiar style, filled with musings and meanderings on diverse subjects, historical allusions, and clever wit: "Stocks are jesters in the court of capitalism; what they say is true, but...when the stock markets go crazy, the kings of capitalism say, 'Hush'"; "Wall Street attracts neurotics because it is a dream world where you can leave a situation flat, without any human complications, by simply selling out." The combination of expansive style and hot tips (by following his own advice he posted capital gains of a quarter of a million dollars in 1958) proved irresistible. When he changed firms, many former readers came over to the new investment house, and *The New Yorker* profiled Gutman as "A Proust in the Wall Street."

One sequence in Gutman's *The Grape Dealer's Daughter* can stand as summary and supreme example of his style and themes. On the visual track a conventionally attractive woman of about 30 models her body in various states of undress in a hotel room. The handheld camera and a single spotlight near the camera for illumination make the image seem like typical low grade pornography while the model undresses, rolls around the bed, strokes the space next to her, and invites the camera-voyeur-spectator to join her. Abruptly

intercut with this playful posing, a long shot of a lush golf course appears. Suddenly we are back in the hotel room. On the sound track Walter Gutman relates his long standing voyeuristic interest in women and his specific relation with this one, Juicy Lucy, and the commercial affectionate nature of their relationship. The meandering voice-over finally gives us a reason for the previously inexplicable golf course image. While Juicy Lucy continues to loll about, the narrator tells us that he asked her what she wanted for her pending birthday and she replied, "A set of golf clubs." This simple statement then introduces a long Proustian-petite-madelaine digression on how Walter himself had practically grown up on the links because his father was one of the six founders of the Midwest's first Jewish golf club, and how this had occurred only 40-odd years after the Civil War and only 50-odd years

after the breaking down of of Europe's Jewish Ghetto walls. What an achievement it must have been, the narrator muses, for these men, some of whom had been born in those ghettos, to found a club promoting this most pastoral of sports.

The combination of sexual imagery and social-historical commentary, of personal obsession and historical musing, brings together the two major themes of Gutman's film work. It also effectively demonstrates the sexual and historical juxtaposition and by the wandering story-telling characteristic of Gutman as a voice-off narrator. And therein lies an interesting, even peculiar, critical problem in approaching his filmmaking.

Gutman deals with familiar concerns of the personal avant gard--sexual desires and social comments mingled together--yet his shaggy-dog narration and amusingly self-indulgent camerra style seem very out of place in a contemporary scene so infected with the values of hard minimalism and smart ass sophistication. For this reason the most sympathetic approach to Gutman's style and concerns comes through the context of home movies. Gutman's achievement can be best understood by shifting the ground of discussion to another place than the classroom, gallery and museum context, especially as those locations have evolved in recent critical practice. Rather than making a Large Statement, the home movie makes a significant one that remains snuggled in with the texture of the everyday. Rather than carefully honed technical accomplishment, the home movie indulges in a graceful informality at its best moments and an awkward or boring self-indulgence at its worst.

Gutman's films casually celebrate his obsessions. On the one hand he deals with history, or more accurately, personages of history and rather off-beat ones at that: Benedict Arnold, America's most famous traitor; Sappho, the lesbian poet of antiquity; and Alexander von Kluck, the unsuccessful German general of the First World War. On the other hand, Gutman lays bare (often literally) his fascination with large muscular women such as body builders and acrobats. The history films are essentially travel movies: pictures taken on vacation, holiday, and weekend excursion to this and that historic and/or picturesque site strung together by Gutman's off camera narration and musical selections. The films evoke a mood much like watching silent home movies with the filmmaker providing

a running commentary on the scenes, which are interspersed with period illustrations. The sexual fascination films also fit well within the amateur movie experience, typically appearing as documents of this or that friend or acquaintance and dependent on the narrator's explaining for the full effect to be felt.

In pursuing both themes, Gutman's own personality and presence pulls everything together. His telling of the tale is typically slow moving and filled with every interesting aside that comes to mind. moving through the narration like a spaniel happily exploring a new field, Gutman investigates this and then wanders after that, returning from time to time to what might seem the main point. This kind of narrative construction can drive the unprepared to distraction and the unsympathetic out of screening. And for those for whom the watching of an avant garde film must have some clearly articulated direction and payoff, Gutman's pace may seem infuriatingly easy going. But when the films are taken in a very different way (and one not very suitable to contemporary art world protocols), taken in the relaxed way of the home movie watching with appropriate food, drinks, smokes, and other indulgences of minor vices, taken without any particular need to feel the viewer is "going somewhere,"

Gutman's films provide enjoyable recreations, and often subtle and sly revelations of clever wit whose main target is his own foibles and humane humor in history and in instructive irony in life. With a tone of genial self-depreciation, he describes himself and others, past and present, with an awareness of the gentle small illusions we need to sustain ourselves.

Perhaps Walter Gutman is such an eccentric figure in the avant garde film scene because he entered it in such an unorthodox way. An occasional art critic for *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, and *Art in America*, in the late 20's and early 30's he drifted into art circles again in the late 1950's as a painting student, friend of artists, collector, and patron. He collected work by Kline, Gorky, Segal, Kandinsky, and Tworkov, and became the producer of *Pull My Daisy*, and later was producer and central actor for George Kuchar's *Unstrap Me* before finally deciding to make his own films. With a secure financial base and no urgent need to make it in the world of experimental cinema, he pursued film with a self-interest and indulgence few rising young artists could have. Film was for him a truly personal pursuit; one to be shared with and shown to others, to be sure, but one

unencumbered with the demands of a conventional art career.

The experience of producing *Pull My Daisy* influenced his subsequent film work. By using a voice-over narrator rather than lip synch, he saved the complication and expense of synchronous sound. But voice-over can acquire a shifting aspect--sometimes seeming first person authorial voice, other times an impassive third person, and still other times a first person plural (as in "all of us present experienced this"). Robert Haller points out this complexity adding that sometimes the audience is not sure if they are hearing Gutman or a filmed character within the movie. The use of a non-synch soundtrack narrator also reinforces the home movie aspect, for the silent films at home are often accompanied by explanations and stories that emerge from the darkened room from people present but disembodied by the screening situation. Gutman usually sees the story as central, and visuals as something to be collected for it. In several long films he added non-location footage to supply enough visuals for the narration--passing off Vermont as France, for example. Even the jovial guide, he often explained such deceptions on the soundtrack with a tone of amusement.

Gutman's good humor pervades *Circus Girls* which is the best introduction to his work as a whole. The film begins with Maya, a circus aerialist astride an elephant moving through a leafy glade. Gutman in a voice over introduces her and describes the sight as "a magnification of women" before the title comes on over some of his paintings of circus women performing and circus band music. We are then introduced to the skilled horse trainer and rider, Elizabeth Wystuba, whom Gutman tracked down when her traveling circus was performing in Connecticut, though he actually found her doing her clothes in a nearby laundromat. In the film this introduction is accompanied by shots of the performer in at the washing machine and a distinct closeup of her behind while Gutman mentions Degas's famous images of women doing the wash. He muses, "I guess there's nothing more completely feminine than a woman doing the laundry." The remark, almost stupifying in the context of contemporary feminism, manages to be both sincere and silly at the same time. I tried to recall Degas's fluid impressionism while imagining that artistic technique applied to a woman at a top-loading automatic washer. There are no paintings of men doing the wash, the soundtrack's narrator observes,

as the visual track continues with hand-held shots of Wystuba putting a horse through its paces in a parking lot. The camera focus is often off, as well, yet the shot is kept in the film--obviously for the love of the person and action depicted over such technical flaws. At one point the filmmaker even regrets the quality of some shots: "If only I had a better camera....."

Over shots of Wystuba performing on horses, the narration continues with its musings on the meaning of women performers.

The circus is very innocent. Still, it's very erotic. But the eroticism isn't frank. It's held back by innocence. Innocent eroticism. You feel it, But you don't have to acknowledge it. Maybe that's what I'm trying to say in this film.

The film depicts many women performers, sometimes slowed down in their performance through optical printing to show their strength and voluptuousness. For the narrator these large women with their developed muscles embody a special power; "The magic shows up in their bodies, their strong bodies."

While Gutman continues his awed litany of praise for powerful women through the visual track's isolating them and their performances, he also tells stories on himself on the soundtrack. He discusses the performer he almost met backstage, and tells how at the Shriner's circus he was pre-empted from his seat when the major showed up. About 18 minutes into the film and following a number of horse acts, the soundtrack breaks into "Happy Days Are Here Again," played on a rinky tink piano with banjo accompaniment while we see, for the first time, Walter Gutman himself, trying to mount a horse. At this point any reservations one had about the camera's voyeurism toward the woman's performing and the narrator's attitude to them gets swept away into a farcical catharsis. Gutman reveals himself as a jovial potbellied fellow of about 70 years who can't get up on a horse despite the energetic assistance and pushing of two young women. Finally the horse stands alongside a platform, Gutman mounts the beast, and he salutes the camera as the music fades down and we return to the initial sequence of the performer Maya riding bareback on an elephant with ease and grace. Whatever male chauvinism motivates the filmmaker, it is also clear that Walter Gutman poses no threat to any woman. The comic effect of showing

his own physical ineptness heightens the admiration he has for their bodies and abilities. And he depicts those bodies as remarkable not being female, but in being so highly trained in performance. In an age when the image of the physically active woman is dominated by the petite gymnast and the lean runner, Gutman provides an image of large bodied and muscularly developed women which can be appreciated by men and women for its honest frankness about the body and its admiration of physical skill. As the film proceeds it becomes clear that Gutman personally knows many of these performers. He tells us on the sound track, for example, that Sara Wheeler Chapman's family goes back to the Revolutionary War and that he's visited the family home-stead with her while we watch an image of her picking up a scarf with her teeth while balanced on her knees on a free trapeze--the home spun detail enhancing the astonishing action. (figure one) Similarly, he shows Aneta Vargas while explaining that when in town she always stops by his apartment to bake a cake; the domestic detail reveals their friendly relation and in turn heightens our appreciation of the performer's ability to do a one-arm hand stand on a slack wire.

While the ostensible subject of the film is female performers, the film develops that subject only through intervention and transformation of Gutman the artist, his adoration and his desire.

I call her Miss Voluptua. She was in the Ringling show. Her costume is not so innocent. To me she is magically voluptuous. She has really every thing I've tried to describe...If only I had a better camera.

(figure two) If only I had a really better camera...I could do a behind like something beautiful in nature. Like in Africa. Like some voluptuous animal running through the velt.

Several things combine to make Gutman's examination of his obsession unique: his frankness in admitting it, his humor in describing it, and his fundamental respect for others. He discusses his obsession in his introduction to the catalogue of his painting collection donated to the Bowdoin College of Art.

Fetishes, to my mind, are underrated in their creative possibilities. Or to put it another way--the force of a fetish is overrecognized in the sexual area and underrecognized outside of it. Regardless of what word is used to describe an intense and long-lasting force which sometimes drives individuals and groups

of people to extended efforts, the results of this effort are because of what they are--long searches into the nature of reality--likely to lead to products and other results which were not envisioned when the force was first felt and the search started.

Gutman extended his obsession with muscular women in *The Erotic Signal*, financed in part with an American Film Institute grant (showing, I suppose, that even the well-to-do have a chance in the grants game) and chosen to open the 78-79 Whitney Museum film series. Rodger Greenspun described a central moment of the film in a *Penthouse* column.

Somewhere near the middle of *The Erotic Signal*, while we're watching an exceptionally pretty naked young aerialist (Mia Wolf) on a trapeze, Gutman begins expounding on the beauty of strong girl's arms. This reminds him of a certain portrait of Diane de Poitiers (1499-1566), mistress of Henri II of France. His discourse then branches off into musculature in Renaissance paintings of women generally, into the private life of Henri II, and finally into an inspection of the Chateau d'Anet, which Diane had Henri build for her, a key monument of sixteenth-century French architecture. Somehow we have moved from a girl on a swing to ivy on an ancient wall--which connect simply because Gutman, the most absent-minded or pornographers, wants them to connect.

Yet the same wandering about can drive someone in the audience to distraction. reviewing the same film, J. Hoberman noted,

I reached my limit...in the midst of a windy historical reconstruction prompted by a glimpse of a well-turned bicep in the Louvre museum gift shop. Gutman can't be accused of taking himself too seriously; at one point he allows that the search for the ideal muscular women is actually "somewhat idiotic." So, criticizing *The Erotic Signal* as self indulgent is like knocking Ingmar Bergman for making depressing films.

In his subsequent film, *Clothed in Muscle*, Gutman goes further in providing an analysis of what earlier had simply been a matter of bemused fascination. Subtitled *A Dance of the Body*, the film begins

with Claudia Wilborn, a body builder shown in street clothes, at the gym, presenting her body as a human sculpture in a park, and finally posing naked in a studio. We learn she was attracted to body building gyms as bastions of male power and that working out let her feel she was playing with men in a room of living kinetic sculpture. As the camera portrays her nude posing, using some close ups and slight abstractions, we get a sense of this athlete-performer's motives, something Gutman had never really explored before. As the film progresses we see women wrestling and weight lifting and dominatrix, Mary Lou Harmel, clamping a man's head between her thighs. Harmel reports that she doesn't know how it leads to sexual excitement, but there is some kind of relation, and she adds that she enjoys it because it feels good to exert physical strength and power over men. Mixed with moments from the historical and mythological past, such as Cretean bull jumping, *Clothed in Muscle* offers a kind of film essay which keeps returning to the same concern, the strong woman. On the soundtrack Gutman argues that there's much overlap in secondary sexual characteristics between men and women and psychologically lots of transfer from a primary level to a secondary level or eroticism. He goes so far as to speculate that men who like strong women find them a replacement for an attraction to men.

Gutman's sexual obsession films have image tracks which often overrun the non-synch narration: the dancers, acrobats, and weightlifters dominate the genial narrator's ramblings. In contrast, the narrator's story dominates the historical films. Reviewing Benedict Arnold for the New York Daily News, Jerry Oster called it,

...the damndest thing I've ever seen. The soundtrack is about Arnold, that synonym for treason, but the images are of such monumental irrelevance that they are really nothing more than things to look at while listening to the narrator...And yet, the silly thing works. Its roughness and shapelessness are charming. Once one realized that most of the images are devoid of meaningful content, one stops demanding anything from them other than that they change from time to time.

Choosing to do a Bicentennial film about Benedict Arnold provides another example of Gutman's offbeat perverse imagination. While an attraction to military history and a fascination for family lines that go

back to the colonial past is ordinary, the choice of America's most famous traitor is not. Rather than the action adventure epic the subject calls for we are treated to a collection of shots of quaint New Englanders celebrating the Bicentennial in a period costume, Revolutionary War locations with historical plaques, scenic shots marked with a shaky handheld camera, and occasional shots of old drawings and engravings of the Arnold story. The narrator offers many asides and curiosities that seem totally off track until we realize that the whole enterprise strings together various tales which then serve to question the very nature of historical interpretation. Arnold was a traitor but he was also, the old Wall Street hand reminds us, primarily a businessman, not a military professional. He was a commercial traitor, a privateer, who had good reasons for feeling he wasn't sufficiently recognized and promoted for his war exploits. Arnold, it's often forgotten, escaped to England where he was handsomely pensioned. In one of the ironies of history, his British contact, Major John Andre was hung as a spy after being apprehended by three colonial militiamen. The unfortunate Andre had hailed them as comrades because one was wearing a British uniform, not knowing that they were thieves who had stolen the outfit. This version does not tell what the Bicentennial hoopla wanted. And children are not supposed to learn that the War of Independence was fought by men looking for the main chance.

While Benedict Arnold stays pretty close to historical documentation, *The March on Paris* concocts an interesting fictional speculation about General Alexander Von Kluck, leader of the German drive into France in 1914. It was the custom then for young officers to survey potential enemy territory that they might someday invade, and Gutman imagines that young Von Kluck spent a summer in rural France posing as a painter. Meeting an attractive young woman, the officer falls in love and has a brief romance. Many years later, head of an invasion force, his memory intersects with his military assignment. Filled with historical war footage, maps, simple animation of period pictures, and a music soundtrack of folk songs, ballads, and military music, the film is more visually diverse than other Gutman efforts. The pace remains very leisurely, and many picturesque shots of the young lovers in the Ardennes and Aix-en-chapelle region enact the story in mime while the soundtrack uses music and Gutman's narration.

Scenes of springtime rural life in the Maryland-Virginia area seems the main visual motivation of *The Very Brief Romance of Barbara Frietchie and Stonewall Jackson* which touches on the Whillier poem about Frietchie raising the flag, and makes various remarks about the Civil War. While Gutman begins by saying it was a romantic war, he adds that one of his grandfathers was drafted into the Union Army but bought his way out of it. The film presents a tourist view of the region and waxes sentimental about the Old South and its people. It lacks the usual Gutman ironies and often drags along, enlivened with peculiar cuts (shot in a New York City nightclub) to a nude woman doing a snake dance to the ludicrous sound of a piano playing "My Old Kentucky Home."

C0-directed with Jessie Holladay Duane, the female lead of *The March on Paris*, Sappho presents a portrait of the artist, but since so little is known about the Greek poet, the many landscape shots of the island of Lesbos have a cumulative power of evoking a mood of historical regret at the Cristian suppression of the lesbian writer. The film is expanded by readings from Sappho's poetry and allusive illustrations in the form of woman shown with traditional lyres, doing dance movements in a plaza, and moving about the fragmentary ruins. The continuing appeal of Sappho's poetry, Gutman offers, lies in their being extremely personal statments, usually about love, and thus although ancient in origin, they don't have to be explained to a contemporary audience.

As in other historical films, Gutman's approach bears a certain resemblance to the BBC style educational documentary with its main conceit of being present with a camera at the site of past events, as if the presence of the place held some secret or power. But instead of Sir Kenneth Clark standing up in front of the location we have Gutman's folksy voice off-camera reflecting on how nice it is for him to be able to see this in his old age. He argues that Greek culture and religion valued strong women. At the same time there are only the slightest traces of that past on Lesbos today. The most substantial ancient edifice is a Roman era aqueduct, and only the main hotel's name commemorates the poet. Ledgends about Sappho fill in for the missing historical data and take up more room than the 700 extant lines of her poetry. Her work was burned by the Christian church and

Sappho became a symbol of sensual love in general as well as of tabooed lesbian sexuality. As evidence, Gutman offers his own testimony that visiting a whorehouse in Florence in the 1920's, he discovered that a doormat with her name was a traditional furnishing, evoking forbidden, sensual love. (Though I can also point out that another meaning adheres to men wiping their feet on the name of the most famous historical lesbian before entering a place of prostitution.) Gutman's respect for Sappho is as clear as is amusement with Arnold, and this personalization of history manages to balance the fact against fiction, memory with desire, while underlining Gutman's personal erotic make-up.

Another side of Gutman's artistic production consists of his documentation of artists and performers. While this is integrated into sexual obsession films, it also exists in Trisha Brown Company at the Whitney Museum, 1971 *The Rehearsal* which shows the dancers walking on walls while wearing harnesses rigged to small trollies running on rails above them. In a fragment from *The Stroll*, which he shows separately, we have an astonishing ground level shot of dancer Joseph Schlichter leaping and bouncing down a Manhattan building in a combination of mountain-climber rappelling and acrobatic dance performance.

Clearly in the home movie genre, *Kay Rosaire and Her Lions*, shows the daily rehearsal of a lion tamer. While the obvious performance oxymoron of *Beauty and the Beast* is present, since she's not in costume we see Rosaire in a different light. She begins by grooming a lion and goes through the maneuvers (putting her head in an animal's mouth, posing on the sprawled out beasts, having the lion leap through a burning hoop, ect.) and some actions are repeated with her wearing a different top. What makes this modest film interesting is a kind of behind the scenes informality. The performance seems less of an act and we get a strong sense of Rosaire's interaction with the animals. (figure 3). In a similar vein, *It Happened in Sarasota* shows the Chapman family during winter vacation from their circus touring. The daily practicing of routines continues accompanied by circus music played on a kazoo and interrupted by a conversation between Gutman and Jessie Holladay Duane, who also edited the film. The soundtrack is classic home movie remarks such as, "She's so graceful!" When the family's adolescent daughter plays with her

younger brother and gives him a kiss, Duane comments, "I bet you wish you were him." Gutman's enthusiastic reply: "I sure do!"

His associations with painters, dancers and circus performers must have changed Gutman. The 1959 New Yorker piece presents him with a conventional Westport, Connecticut, domestic life, though it also mentions his work as a producer of the then unreleased Pull My Daisy. Eight years later in his acting debut in Untrap Me, he is found at the film's conclusion in a bathtub with Juicy Lucy having an obviously good time. Gutman told me that when he first met circus people in the 1950's he was very shy and it took him a long time to overcome that feeling. When he became a painter using female models, he admitted, "I had to work very hard at being an artist so they wouldn't think I was a dirty old man." Carolee Schneeman recalls Gutman:

In the 1960's men who were supportive of women artists were so rare as to be regarded with suspicion. Jill Johnston convinced me that Walter might be willing to provide the necessary funds for my Judson Church performance of "Meat Joy--Kinetic Theater."...Gutman founded the Benedict Arnold Foundation for my first grant. Walter was exceptional in his conception of the physical strength and creative power of women--not as sexual embellishment, but as the basis of a vital aesthetic and corrective ethic. His painting muse was not passive, fragmented, bloodless but a constant discovery of women sustaining the perfectability of rigorous physical and creative forms. His image sources were women wrestlers, dancers, aviators, gymnasts, high-wire performers, animal trainers, Gutman gathered women painters, writers, dancers, wrestlers, acrobats in his small apartment where we looked at his current paintings. We feasted on roast beef, drank ourselves silly, practiced throws, catches, and feints on Walter--a large man--and each other, narrowly avoiding the stacks of paintings.

Patron and friend of artists and performers and painter and filmmaker himself, Gutman transcends being simply a dirty old man. And yet he never exactly moves away from being one. In The Grape Dealer's Daughter (1968), his first long film, there's a good deal of the relatively raw pornography so popular in that period of the New American Cinema--voyeuristic posing of a woman wearing only a

mink coat and an interior monologue ("What should I do? Should I kneel down in front of her and kiss her pussy?") then completed in action. But by the film's conclusion we get to an autobiographical reenactment. The grape dealer's daughter joins him with pounds and pounds of grapes. And potbellied Gutman plays Bacchus (and well-cast in the role), but played with a strong feeling of infantile regression. Commenting in voice over on this replay of desire, the remembrance of things past, he recalls the excitement and poignancy of this afternoon together. "We knew we were being silly, bizarre, special. We knew we wouldn't see each other again." With his respect for women, lack of self pity, sensible humor, joyful lust, and shameless self-awareness, Walter Gutman provides one of the best examples of a heterosexual man exploring his own sexual obsessions, fetishes, and experiences in American experimental film.